

A Moment of Comfort by Collie Parkillo

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Summary: Richie Tozier reminisces. RichieEddie.

A Moment of Comfort

Richie Tozier had seen a lot of shitty things in his day. He was pretty confident when he said that the best description of his childhood would be a steaming pile of shit. Not because it was too terrible, but just because it hadn't really been anything at all. It hadn't been extraordinary-it hadn't even been good, but it hadn't really been bad either. And that was what made it shit.

Bill, Beverly, Ben, Mike, even Stan, they'd all felt like heroes at some point. But him? No. He was just Richie, Richie, the boy with the voices, who while the others found heroism without searching for it, searched for it and never found it. And the only other person who'd had the same shitty, useless childhood was Eddie Kaspbrak.

So when he was listening to the drip-drip of the sludge and slime and shit and the tapping of his friends' feet on the metallic ground in the Derry sewers and he thought he would lose his mind, the thing he held onto was Eddie.

It was a silly memory, really. He wasn't even sure if Eddie remembered it himself, but he knew it too well. It had kept him company all those years of sleeping alone, and it would keep him company now.

They were kids. Only eleven or so. Eddie was staying over at Richie's house, and Richie's mom had made them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Richie remembered as a kid he'd always stuffed food in his mouth and chewed too loud, and Eddie would complain that it was gross.

They'd gone upstairs to Richie's tiny little room with all the music posters on them. Richie couldn't remember the faces of the musicians or even what groups they were, just that he'd put them up because the empty walls depressed him. "So, what do you want to do?" He'd asked Eddie.

"I dunno. Do you want to play Monopoly or something?" They had had the entire evening to themselves, Eddie's mom was letting him stay the night and Richie had been looking forward to it all day. It

was like he'd wanted to tell everyone in school that he was having a friend over for the night, he was so excited. But he knew that would have elicited quite a reaction from Bowers and his gang, so it stayed a secret from all but him and Eddie all through their classes, like there was this little bright light sitting between them that only they could see.

Richie didn't remember that particular Monopoly game so well, but he could recall perfectly how it went whenever they played. That time couldn't have been any different. Eddie couldn't yell too loud because he'd start coughing, but he always got so worked up over having to pay rent. "Come on, Richie, that isn't fair!" Eddie would groan, looking down at the little yellow house that his little metal show playing piece had ended up on. "You must've rigged the dice or something."

"Life isn't fair, kid," Richie would say in a mock-New York City gangster voice. He didn't know if Mr. Monopoly had a voice, but if he did, he imagined that would probably be what it sounded like. He'd grinned at Eddie, and Eddie'd given him a glare but had handed him the purple play money anyways.

Soon enough Richie's mom came in and told them that it had to be lights out, and Richie had protested "But nobody's won yet!" "It's a tie," Eddie said smugly. "Nobody wins and nobody loses."

"You're just happy you didn't lose, Eds."

"Don't call me Eds, you cheater."

Richie's mom had smiled down at the two bickering boys and told them to brush their teeth. It'd always been funny to Richie how adults found kids arguing hilarious or cute or something. Richie had never thought arguments were anything to smile about, but in the case of that particular one he supposed he could understand.

So they'd brushed their teeth and got their pajamas on and got into bed. It was too hot to wear anything other than a t-shirt. To hell with PJ pants, thought Richie. What'd it matter anyways? It wasn't like they were going to look at each other's junks while they slept. Eddie was apparently a very quick sleeper, because after a slurred

"G'night, Richie" it seemed he was out cold, leaving Richie lying on the other side of the queen-size bed, staring at the plaster in the ceiling.

He turned over on his side, looking at Eddie's sleeping form. The other boy sounded a little like he was snoring, but it was raspier than snoring. Richie figured it was because of his asthma. He kinda liked it. It was like he could tell by the breathing that it was really Eddie next to him, not some weird apparition or something. Yeah, sure he liked it, but it was kind of keeping him awake.

Eddie's t-shirt was some huge, baggy shirt that said something about a summer camp on it. He wondered if Eddie went to summer camp, or if it was his mom's or something. Richie turned over, fixing his gaze to the other side of the room.

The windows of the room were open, and a chilly but somehow pleasant breeze blew the curtains two and fro. They could do with some wind, summer was too hot. Richie had wanted to say 'too fucking hot' but somehow he felt like even if he said it in his head, somebody would come down and hit him or yell at him and say it was a bad word. He wasn't quite at the age where 'bad words' stopped being bad.

Richie turned over again. Eddie was still doing the loud breathing thing. It was kind of hard to see without his glasses, but given that he was far-sighted and Eddie was far enough away from him on the bed, he could see him alright. Eddie's dark hair was in his eyes, a little wisp of it blowing up and down as he breathed out through his mouth. It was cute. Maybe even beautiful. There's usually very little that's beautiful about an eleven-year old boy, but Eddie was a special case.

Suddenly Richie remembered the words Henry Bowers would throw around that he didn't even dare to say. The words that just meant somebody loving somebody else in a different way than people were used to.

Maybe it was because he did all the voices, but somehow Richie wasn't surprised or scared of that concept. The voices made nothing scary or surprising anymore, because he'd been so many people that

he supposed somehow he knew how they felt.

Did those words mean him? When he looked at Eddie like that, did he become those words?

Richie scooted closer to Eddie on the bed. "Eds," he hissed. Eddie didn't respond. He thought about poking him, but decided against it. Why the hell did he even say his name in the first place? He had no idea what he wanted to say or how to say it, but he just wanted to talk to him.

Eddie's small, lanky body didn't nearly take up all of the big pillow his head rested on, so Richie put his head down next to it. The last thing he remembered before he fell asleep was Eddie's face, merely inches from him, how he'd smiled a little in his sleep and how Richie had wanted to stay like that for the rest of his life.

Richie had no idea what had happened the day after. It was before It, and Richie had always feared that It would somehow know those things he thought, how he'd thought that Eddie Kaspbrak was beautiful and how he felt like even those innocent, lovey-dovey thoughts were somehow dirty.

But Richie held onto that memory, and sometimes when he laid in the queen-size bed in his shitty apartment that he spent his shitty, lonely life in he'd close his eyes and he'd be back in the soft, cool queen-size bed he'd slept in every night of his childhood, and Eddie Kaspbrak would be there beside him.